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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7357th meeting

Thursday, 8 January 2015, 3.20 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Barros Melet	(Chile)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Mr. Baublys
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. McLay
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2014/945)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2014/945)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/945, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chambas.

Mr. Chambas: I am pleased to be in the Chamber today to brief the Council for the first time in my capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa on the situation in the subregion.

Recent developments demonstrate the fragile political situation in many West African nations in the lead-up to presidential and legislative elections in 2015 and 2016. Some of these countries' tensions are linked to incumbent leaders who face resistance in their attempts at holding on to power through constitutional revisions.

In the Gambia, on 30 December, fighting erupted at the State House in Banjul as a mutiny led by Lieutenant Colonel Lamin Sanneh attempted to unseat President Yahya Jammeh of the Gambia from his 20-year rule in power. The attack was defeated by forces loyal to the President, who was out of the country at the time. The coup attempt was the third over the past eight years. Meanwhile, there are reports of arrests of family members of alleged coup plotters. I am planning to visit Banjul on 14 and 15 January and look forwarding to meeting with President Jammeh to discuss the situation in the country. I will reiterate our firm condemnation of any attempt to seize power by unconstitutional means, and encourage the Gambian authorities to work with the support of international partners to ensure a credible investigation of the events that occurred in order to ensure respect for judicial procedures and human rights.

In Burkina Faso, a popular insurrection at the end of October forced President Blaise Compaoré to resign following his attempt to amend the Constitution in order to extend his term in power, bringing his 27-year rule to an abrupt end. Backed by international partners, a joint mission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU) and the United Nations helped secure an agreement by national stakeholders on a civilian-led transition, the guiding principles of which are enshrined in the Charter of the Transition, signed on 16 November.

An international follow-up and support group for the transition in Burkina Faso has been established to assist the transitional institutions during this critical period, which will include the organization of presidential and legislative elections by November 2015. The group will hold its inaugural meeting on 13 January in Ouagadougou, and we look forward to being there to participate in that meeting.

In 2015, five other West African countries will hold presidential elections: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria and Togo. In Togo, where President Faure Gnassingbé's party has been in power since 1967, a new opposition coalition staged demonstrations in November and December, and indeed have continued into January 2015, in Lomé. The contentious issue remains the lack of consensus on political reforms, particularly the introduction of presidential term limits and reform of the single-round voting system. Those issues need to be given priority by the Government to ease the tensions in the country.

In neighbouring Benin, a consensus needs to be found on the implementation of the electronic voter registration lists, which is causing delays in the organization of local elections and could affect legislative and presidential elections scheduled for 2015 and 2016, respectively. The United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) will be closely engaged with the authorities in Togo and Benin in the coming weeks with a view to mobilizing efforts and encouraging them to lay the ground for peaceful and credible elections.

In the Niger, frictions have continued between the Government and opposition political parties, against

the background of a fragile security situation, due mainly to violence and instability in neighbouring countries, especially Libya and Mali, but also Nigeria. In Côte d'Ivoire, while political dialogue between the Government and opposition parties resumed, tensions persist, with possible risks of electoral and/or post-electoral violence in October 2015.

About a month from now — precisely 43 days from now — Nigerians will go to the polls for the presidential and legislative elections. The general election is taking place against a backdrop of violent insurgency by Boko Haram, a terrorist group in the north-east, sectarian conflicts in the north-central and north-west of the country and an increasingly tense pre-electoral environment. The holding of polls throughout the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa will present a formidable challenge. The risk of pre- and post-electoral violence requires the international community to engage further with Nigeria to address its ongoing challenges and to support the holding of credible and peaceful elections throughout the country.

The region remains vulnerable to insecurity and terrorist threats. In north-eastern Nigeria, the security situation has shown no signs of improvement despite national and regional efforts. The civilian populations in the three north-eastern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe have over the past six months been subjected to intense attacks and systematic human rights violations, including the razing of civilian settlements, kidnappings, suicide bombings, assassinations and others.

The death toll of that vicious violence, most of which has been attributed to the terrorist group Boko Haram, is staggering, and counter-insurgency measures have failed to provide an adequate protection of civilians. Since the abduction of over 200 schoolgirls from Chibok, Borno state, the international community has been supporting the Government of Nigeria's efforts to address the problem. As part of the most recent efforts, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force will hold the first in a series of workshops for law enforcement officials on human rights, the rule of law and the prevention of terrorism during the third week of January.

In my capacity as the Secretary-General's High-Level Representative for Nigeria, I visited the country in November and December to consult with high-level Government officials and other stakeholders with a view to building consensus to face the threat of the terrorist group Boko Haram and to assess the potential of elections-related violence. While the Boko Haram terrorist insurgency is deeply rooted in Nigeria, it is increasingly spilling across the borders into Cameroon, Niger and Chad. More than 300,000 Nigerians have sought refuge in north-western Cameroon and south-western Niger, adding pressure on the local economies in those countries and destabilizing the internal security situation. UNOWA, in collaboration with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), will continue to work closely with the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission to address the regional aspects of the threat posed by the Boko Haram terrorist group.

Insecurity in north-eastern Nigeria has also seriously impeded the activities of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, in particular its critical field assessments. In my capacity as Chairman of the Mixed Commission, I have endeavoured to address the delay and adapt the scope of work to the evolving security situation. The demarcation continues. To complete the demarcation, 767 pillars remain to be constructed, for which funding is required.

Among other security challenges affecting the region, violent piracy in the Gulf of Guinea continues to hinder West Africa's economy and trade. Countries of the region have made progress on the operationalization of a maritime security infrastructure. Further efforts are necessary, including for the resolution of maritime border disputes. UNOWA and UNOCA will continue to provide support to ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States, and the Gulf of Guinea Commission in the implementation of the strategic framework adopted at the Yaoundé summit of 15 June 2013.

Before I conclude, allow me to quickly touch upon the Ebola outbreak, which wreaked havoc in West Africa in 2014, causing at least 8,200 deaths. In mid-November, together with the President of the ECOWAS Commission, I visited the three most affected countries, namely Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, which have been politically and economically isolated. Except for Mali, all neighbouring countries have at some point closed their land borders and imposed flight restrictions. That has also hindered the functioning of regional and subregional mechanisms.

While the laudable humanitarian interventions of the international community — including the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, which

must be highly commended — continue, we must ensure that the aftermath of the outbreak does not reverse the gains made during years of peacebuilding activities in those three fragile States.

I would like to thank the Council for its continued interest and support to the consolidation of peace, security and democracy in West Africa.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Chambas for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.